



SENATOR ROBERT D. GARTON

serving district 41: bartholomew and johnson counties

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Inspector General Bill Passes House Unanimously

What surprisingly had turned into one of the most contentious issues of the 2005 session of the General Assembly is finally making progress, and not a moment too soon.

In 2004, newspaper readers across the state saw an extraordinary number of headlines announcing corruption in state government. In fact, years of scandal in previous administrations cost the state at least \$25 million. An appointed state examiner said we may never know the full extent of misspending.

It can be argued that Indiana state government sees no more scandal than any other state government or large business. The difference is that Indiana government, until recently, lacked any oversight whatsoever. And when those embezzled and misspent dollars belong to taxpayers, a lack of accountability is unforgivable.

For almost two years, Senate Republicans have been decrying the lack of oversight in state agencies. This year, on his first day in office, Gov. Mitch Daniels created by executive order the position of Inspector General - a post that 58 federal agencies, 11 states and every branch of the military already have - to provide much-needed accountability. The Legislature, however, felt compelled to make the job permanent and give the inspector the ability to prosecute the wrongdoings he found. Considering that some states allow the attorney general or even the governor himself to prosecute matters of public corruption, this was not an unreasonable request.

In an attempt to block the effort, House Democrats walked out of session and refused to work with Republicans to come up with a workable compromise, setting back the codification of the Inspector General post.

The issue came back recently, though, when the House added the Inspector General language into Senate Bill 18. The original bill would have allowed the Inspector General to prosecute suspected government crimes if local prosecutors did not file charges within six months. The amended version allows an appeals court judge to appoint the Inspector General or choose an elected county prosecutor as a special prosecutor for such cases. In the end, the most important aspect of the bill is not who prosecutes the wrongdoers; it's that they are prosecuted in the first place.

Since Gov. Daniels created this position, reports to the Inspector General's hotline have increased 20-fold compared to the old State Ethics Commission line, and the Inspector General has opened more than 50 investigations as a result of these reports. As this administration uncovers more past cases of corruption, the headlines may continue, but that only means the inspector is doing his job.

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FUNDING THE COLTS STADIUM AND CONVENTION CENTER

Last week, the Senate Tax and Fiscal Policy Committee held a hearing on the concept of a new stadium for the Indianapolis Colts and the expansion of the Indiana Convention Center. Several attempts have been made at creating a funding package for the project, but all have fallen short of the goal line. With about six weeks remaining in the legislative session, everyone needs to work together to make a final decision.

Several different funding mechanisms for the project have been proposed, but none have advanced in the legislative session. Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson proposed funding the projects by expanding gambling in the state, but that proposal never made it out of a committee in the House of Representatives. A key representative proposed alternate funding plan that did not address the convention center, but that initiative died when the House minority walked out on a deadline day two weeks ago.

Monday, Senator Luke Kenley (R-Noblesville) held a press conference to announce funding plans for the Stadium and Convention Center. Kenley's plan involves private funding, state funding, and local funding. It places financial responsibility on those who use the facilities, those businesses in the nearby area

who benefit from the facility, those who live in the community and benefit from its vibrancy, and the state as a whole, which benefits economically from the activities created by the facilities.

Now, the Senate is trying to draw many parties to the table. At the recent committee hearing, the Indianapolis Capital Improvements Board explained the stadium and convention center directly result in \$33 million in revenue for the state of Indiana each year. A new plan would not only help the Colts and conventions, but would also help sustain downtown hotels, restaurants and retail stores. Colts head coach Tony Dungy also testified, stating that the team needs a new facility in order to stay competitive.

NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue and more representatives from the Colts joined the discussion later in the week.

The success of downtown Indianapolis has a positive impact on quality of living in District 41. I am proud of the Colts and the numerous conventions that our state hosts. I will support creative ways to fund the project without placing a great financial burden on Indiana taxpayers.

SENATE DISTRICT 41

Adopted April 29, 2001
Effective November 5, 2002

This map is a visual representation of the district and is only for reference purposes. For a detailed description of this district, consult the Indiana Code.

